

Because of these waivers, the State actually pays more per FTE than would be expected based on tuition rates. For example, in FY 2010-11 the total cost per curriculum FTE is approximately \$5,483. Curriculum tuition per FTE in FY 2010-11 is \$1,808.⁴ However, because many students are not required to pay tuition, actual curriculum student receipts per FTE are only \$1,534 and State appropriations pay for the remaining \$3,949 per FTE. It is important to note that colleges receive the same reimbursement per FTE regardless of whether or not tuition is waived; if tuition waived increases over time, either State appropriations make up the difference or funding per FTE goes down.

History

Community College tuition waivers first appeared in North Carolina General Statutes in 1973, when the General Assembly authorized tuition waivers for local law enforcement, volunteer firemen, and prison inmates. Since then, many other groups have been added to this list. Most recently, in 2008, the General Assembly authorized tuition waivers for elementary and secondary school employees enrolled in first aid or CPR courses.

During the 2009-2010 biennium, the General Assembly mandated multiple changes to existing tuition waivers:

- The senior citizen tuition waiver was moved from G.S. 115B-2 to G.S. 115D-5(b) and, for the first time, was limited to six hours of credit instruction and one course of noncredit instruction per academic semester.
- G.S. 115D-5(b), the primary location of community college tuition waivers in the General Statutes, was reorganized in 2010, and the Human Resources Development waiver was codified in the statute at that time (previously, this waiver was State Board policy as directed by S.L. 2001-424, Section 30.3).
- G.S. 115D-5(b) was amended to make changes to the local law-enforcement officer tuition waiver, clarifying that tuition for training courses may be waived for municipal, county, or State law-enforcement officers.
- G.S. 115D-39 was amended, stating that any federal law enforcement officer whose permanent duty station is within North Carolina shall also be eligible for the State resident community college tuition rate for law-enforcement training courses.

Cost

In FY 2009-10, almost \$69 million in tuition was waived in the categories for which tuition waiver information is tracked⁵. As shown in Figure 1 (below), the total amount of tuition waived has grown steadily over the last 10 years, almost tripling between FY 2000-01 and FY 2009-10. In the same period, curriculum tuition almost doubled, rising from \$27.50 per credit hour to \$50.00 per credit hour. Continuing education fees were also increased in 2009 (for the first time since 1999), but the fee schedule was changed at the same time making a year-to-year comparison difficult. Additionally, the number of waivers granted is not tracked on a statewide level, so it is not possible to determine how much of the growth is due to tuition increases and how much is due to increases in usage.

⁴ FY 2010-11 curriculum tuition is \$56.50 per credit hour. At 16 credit hours per semester for 2 semesters, the maximum annual tuition is \$1,808.

⁵ Out-of-state students that are permitted to pay the in-state rate are not included in this total. Additionally, although basic skills programs are provided free-of-charge to students, there is no basic skills tuition amount from which to calculate tuition waived and these courses are also not included in the total.